

“The key to getting started is getting started

Digital video: it's not that difficult

By Kary Roney, Jewett Elementary, kary.rogney@district6.org

Dust off those old camcorders hiding in your school librarian's closet. Yes, the big, bulky ones that haven't been used since the last student teacher needed to record a lesson. You may be surprised to learn that you can use that ol' clunky thing to transfer video into your average computer and do a fairly simple three-step video editing process.

For the past couple of years I've been playing, shoulder-to-shoulder with my first graders, producing short videos. We've filmed puppet theater, claymation, stop-action drawing and painting, scenes of school activities, readers theater, clips for slideshows, and we're still inventing new uses all of the time.

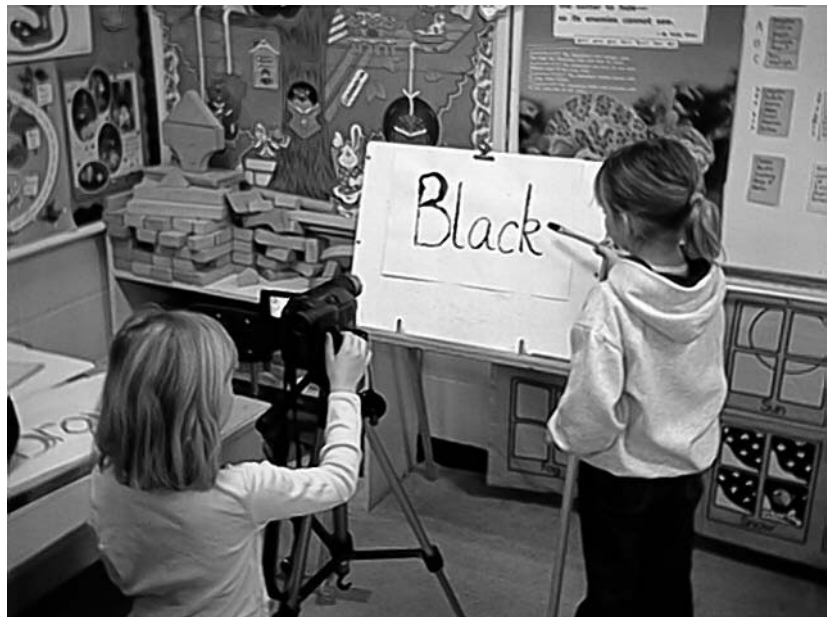
The cost, the simplicity, and the high interest factor have hooked me on short video production as a perennial activity for my class. I sense many of you are beginning to back away, thinking, “That's great for you, but I don't have time to learn about new technology. Keeping up with my email pushes me to my technological limits. It must be expensive and it may be hard to get training, too.”

Come on. We can all slap a blank tape into that beast of a video recorder, push record, rewind, plug in a few cords, click a couple of icons, push play, select some scenes that you want, type a title, pick fun background music, click save; now you have a digitized video clip that can be inserted into a slideshow, put on a CD, or posted on a school web page. Your students will learn it faster than you will if you just take a deep breath and get them in front of the computer with you as you learn.

My little 6- and 7-year-olds help me make key decisions in regard to font styles/ colors for fun titles, matching background music genres, and the use of effective transitions. Of course with first graders I am doing most of the work, but they are involved in much of the decision-making during the filming process, too. Just think, if you had a few students motivated to learn this skill with you, they could lead small groups to plan projects and lead the creating of them. It's such a great format for collaborative learning.

I purchased a JVC camcorder a couple of years ago with class fund raising money. What I like about JVC camcorders is their ability to capture 1-second intervals for doing stop-action animation of clay, drawing, or painting; people used to use 8mm film to accomplish a similar (and a little bit better) effect. The way I get the footage into my computer is through a converter cord. One end is a USB cord (most

newer computers have USB ports) and the other connects to the white, red, and yellow composite video cables from your camcorder or VCR (pull out all those BETA and VHS cassettes you've got boxed away). The converter cable and the video editing software (Studio Version 7.0) are made by award winning-Pinnacle Systems. It is their LINX system that I



purchased through JourneyEd.com for approximately \$45.00, including shipping. You must initially set up an account with them verifying that you are a student or a teacher in order to purchase from their long list of discounted software titles.

I think the key to getting started is getting started, keeping it simple, and having fun learning right along with your students. Ideally you will want access to a large monitor or projection system to lead this activity with a large group. Using center rotations with the help of colleagues or parents, teachers can manage classes effectively in smaller groups. This will lead to a teamed effort to create a class or team video project. Video is an powerful tool that motivates reluctant learners and engages students in meaningful ways. And since video is such a huge and influential part of our society, wouldn't it be great to influence your students positively with this same media?

I know it's working, because I recently finished a video called “Kids Count” with my class and sat my three-year-old son on my lap to watch it. He was so excited the whole time as he recognized numbers and letters and counted along (Sesame Street style.) It really hit me at that moment how engaging our little video really was. Now think about the time invested and the feeling of ownership that my students have over the

same educational piece of work. It's very exciting.

Well, I hope I've piqued your interest in this powerful media tool. Those of you in the District 6 community have a great opportunity to jump aboard quite painlessly. This district is paying for the LINX program, and providing three free 1.5-hour workshops on February 19, 26 and March 4 from 3:30 pm-5:00 pm at Jewett Elementary. I'll be leading the charge and introducing any daring souls out there to the use of this exciting hardware/software program. Feel free to email me at if you have questions. I'll do my best not to lead you too far astray. I have also created several resource and class web pages that are linked to the Staff Pages at jewett.district6.org. And who knows, you may leave with something for NCCE's *Digitalkies* film festival (see the accompanying article below).

A sincere thanks to Joel Brain's *TechNotes* articles for leading me down this path. Good luck and happy movie-making. Here is a web site that people can go to for more info: www.pinnaclesys.com/support/studio7 and select "Studio Version 7 FAQs."

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Video tutorials abound

Those attempting to capture video onto a PC will want to use the software that Kary suggests: Pinnacle's Studio DV. For those in the Mac world, iMovie is the software of choice. Online tutorials to get you rollin' with these programs are:

Studio DV Tutorial

<http://howto.lycos.com/lycos/series/1,,5%2B24%2B26055%2B24783,00.html>

iMovie Tutorial

<http://www.dvcreators.net/awesomeimovies/>

General Resources

<http://videouniversity.com/>

<http://desktopvideo.about.com/>

Want to bring your students up to speed using video as a communication tool? Need some help? Kary's free workshop sounds like a great offer. For those of you outside District 6, contact Kary directly to see if space is available (you'll need to purchase Pinnacle first).

For anything from a conversation over the phone to some serious hand-holding (professionally speaking, of course) contact Joel Brain at 541-850-1116 or joel_brain@soesd.k12.or.us.

Digitalkies 2004: NCCE's digital film festival

Plan, shoot, edit, enhance, and submit a short video! Your entry puts you in the running for one of the great prizes being awarded in this contest, and the winning entries in each category will be shown at this year's NCCE Annual Conference in Spokane. K-12 students or faculty must create all entries. You may enter as many times as you like.

For rules, Basic Rules, categories, judging criteria, and forms and resources, go to www.ncce.org/digitalkies/index.html.

